‘Janam yadi fir se mile, to itna sa chahunga main’ April 3 2012, IPL’s 5th season kicks off with legendary Mr Amitabh Bachchan reciting these lines written by lyricist Prasoon Joshi, marking the beginning of a 54 day long battle between 9 teams with best of the cricketing talent from around the world taking part in it. But much before this battle on cricket field began, another war was waged between these same teams, but off the field – the ‘battle of brands’. Every IPL franchise spent humongous amount of money in promoting their brand, leaving no stone unturned and no media unexplored. So, before the action in the cricket carnival begins, all the franchises want to garner maximum support possible for their team. The task seems a little uphill though, considering the recent below-par performance of the Indian cricket team. Nevertheless, the show must go on and so must this battle of brands. Let’s have a look at what weapons each team posses in its marketing artillery!

Starting with the defending champions –

Chennai Superkings –

After the huge success of ‘Whistle Phodu’ CSK has launched a new participative cheer video titled ‘Chennai Super Kings ku Raise Your Hands’. The concept of ‘Mexican wave’ has been
used in the video, with the fans forming a city-long Mexican wave in Chennai. The objectives have been to build a fan base for the team and enhance fan participation. Created by OPN advertising, the video is about a minute long and is pitched as a tribute to the fans for their support. In only 1 week the video has managed 90000 views on YouTube. Along with merchandising, promotions through contests in print, online and radio have also been undertaken by CSK. CSK organized a mascot naming contest, with the winner entry being ‘Super Singham’. On the official website, CSK fans will also be able to see behind the scene videos of players.

The team has also released its anthem ‘Whistle Podu’ – Machi song. The singing duo of Charulatha Mani and Srimathumitha joined by singer Mukesh have written composed and sung the track. In another one of its kind partnership initiative, Washington Apples have partnered with CSK as ‘Official Fruit’ for the team for IPL season 5. Mindshare is the media agency and Think Open is the creative agency for the Chennai Superkings.

Kolkata Knightriders –

KKR has launched its new marketing campaign called ‘New Dawn New Knights’. It signifies that this year they have new players, a new coach and thus a new winning spirit. The major change this year is the new and refreshed logo of KKR. Created by leading global branding agency, Lambie-Nairn, the new logo is more vibrant and unique. Though having the same colours and feel, the logo is said to be easily applicable everywhere from screen to merchandising. Also, the word ‘Kolkata’ is made more prominent in the new logo. Targeting consumers of age 18-25 years, Nokia launched a campaign called ‘Nokia Channel Me’ in association with KKR. The campaign will revolve around Nokia making applications and content available to its Smartphone users. KKR is using all the major social media channels to a great effect, and it has even integrated blogs and gallery in its portal KKR.in. It has also hired ‘22feet’, a Bengaluru-based digital agency to manage social media activity. KKR is using Twitter as well to the fullest by including a variety of tweets; from images to promotion to announcement to ticket sales. With the marketing machine Shahrukh Khan himself on their side, KKR is giving some strong vibes as far as their marketing strategies are concerned. The picture on-field though is still gloomy, with KKR losing their first encounter with the Daredevils. This makes one wonder whether the name of the campaign should rather be ‘New Dawn, New Knights, and Same old story’!
Delhi Daredevils –

Team that hit rock bottom last season has started afresh this time with a new marketing campaign ‘Kasam Daredevils Ki’ and to back up the new campaign they have released a new song ‘Munday Dilli ke, khele front foot pe’. The song has been sung by singer Jaspreet Jasz and composed by Arijit Datta and Micu Patel. Delhi Daredevils, aiming to make a mark this season of the DLF IPL has planned to engage with fans by promoting 4 well known personalities famous for their acts of daredevilry as their ‘Superfans’. These include India’s only IronMan athlete Anuradha Vaidyanathan, Arjun Vajpai - the youngest Indian mountaineer to scale three peaks of more than 8000m altitude including the great Mount Everest, Arun Bhardwaj -India’s only ultramarathon runner, and lastly the only Indian woman to ski all the way to South Pole, Reena Kaushal Dharmshaktu. All four were presented the Delhi Daredevils Superfans badge. Cheil Worldwide SW Asia has created a new more interactive website for Delhi Daredevils. For mobile users a mobile WAP site and an application for Smartphones have also been created to provide information like scores, news, and stats etc.

Further, Delhi Daredevils merchandise will also be available at Adidas stores. Adidas is one of the sponsors for DD. Online auction of collectibles will also be held during daredevils’ matches. Delhi Daredevils have also started a CSR initiative called ‘Dare 2 Care’ in collaboration with UNICEF. The team would promote education of girl child in all the cities they visit and a large chunk of money collected through the sales of tickets, merchandise sales and auctioning would go to UNICEF.
Kings XI Punjab –

Like KKR, The Kings XI Punjab also has released a new logo this IPL. The logo is in the form of a warrior’s shield which is often considered as a symbol of pride for the warrior. On top of the shield there lies a banner with the letter sequence ‘K.J.H.P.H’ inscribed on it. These letters represent Kashmir, Jammu, Himachal, Punjab and Haryana, in the sequence of their appearance on the map of India. The lions represent the phrase ‘Sher-e-Punjab. Kings XI Punjab has picked agency Saints and Warriors for its creative duties. This IPL team hosts Kings XI Punjab Cup which aims to nurture talent right at the grass root level by giving them an opportunity to showcase their talent. With the help of Institute of Fashion technology at Punjab University, KXIP has crowdsourced the design of its merchandise. Kings XI Punjab has also tied up with Indraprastha All India Sports Foundation to launch India’s first ever cricket based reality show ‘Cricket Champs' to be aired on UTV Bindass. The show provides a platform for budding young cricketers to showcase their talent in front of millions of television viewers.

Mumbai Indians –

With the god of cricket Sachin Tendulkar on their side Mumbai Indians already have a fan page called ‘MIPaltan' with largest number of fans (25, 71,722) among the IPL teams. The Mumbai Indians marketing campaign is called ‘Players become Friends’ and is aimed at increasing the interaction between the players and the fans. MI players will be posting their personalized videos on Facebook for all the fans to watch and enjoy. In the videos, players will be addressing the fans by their names to make it a dialogue between the players and fans and not just a one-way relationship. Ogilvy & Mather is the creative agency to execute this campaign. Mumbai Indians and Disney Consumer Products also launched Mickey Cricket special collection, a limited edition merchandise range for the kids including apparel and accessories, footwear, stationary and toys, all featuring Disney's Fab Five in fun cricketing attire.
Rajasthan Royals –

Rajasthan royals marketing is mainly through their website http://www.rajasthanroyals.com where they have created a 'Fanzone'. Besides the merchandise, the fanzone contains a whole lot of contests for the RR fans. Some of them include ‘spot the ball contest’, ‘Fourcaster’ where fans predict highest run scorer, wicket taker etc. On the lines of Superselector we have ‘Fantasy League’ where fans create their own cricket team. Rajasthan royals also tied up with Jaipur marathon to distribute their merchandise during the race. They unveiled a new pink-coloured training jersey this time dedicated to the city of Jaipur, the team’s home.

Royal Challengers Bangalore –

RCB launched its new website earlier in March, which is aimed at making navigation easier for its fans. The site has new collection of photos, videos and other downloads for the fans. The RCB has also started a ‘Go Green’ initiative for addressing the issue of global warming and its effects on the environment.
Pune Warriors –

Pune Warriors have been focusing on interacting with its fans through its website. In keeping with the name, the sections on the site have been named like ‘Our Warriors’ which gives player profiles, ‘War news’ and ‘Warrior Club Updates’. The team has also collaborated with Bookmyshow.com for the sale of tickets for the games.

Deccan Chargers –

‘Blue’ is the colour of Deccan Chargers jersey and is also the name of their marketing campaign. DC hosted a series of sports and games events, all having the theme of their signature colour ‘blue’. They organised a Beach Cricket tournament to launch their IPL promotional activity on RK beach in Hyderabad. They also organized a cycle rally featuring over 120 participants including prominent people like Municipal Commissioner Ramanjaneyulu Subbiram Reddy, ex-MP Kondru Murali, Minister for Health and Education Panchakarla Ramesh Babu and other famous personalities from the state administration as well as from the corporate ranks. Some Tollywood films have also associated with Deccan Chargers for promotional campaigns.

Overall we see an increasing trend towards franchises using social media as a way of brand marketing. No matter how unreliable this media is, interactive websites, facebook pages, tweets and YouTube videos are the hot promotional tools this year for the IPL. Also, with the increase in number of Smartphone users, Digital media is coming forth as a media with great scope for the future. Only time will tell how much success do these teams or rather I should say ‘brands’ achieve through these weapons of marketing. Till then let’s just sit back, relax and enjoy the action both on and off the circular battlefield of this great game called cricket!!

References –